

Listening Guide- “Springtime Celebrations”

Composer: Richard Strauss (1864-1949)


**Title: Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche
(Till Eulenspiegel’s Merry Pranks)**

Recording: Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Herbert von Karajan conductor

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99qWgSItaNQ>


Program Note: *Till Eulenspiegel’s Merry Pranks* is one of Richard Strauss’ most well-known and popular tone poems. The story is based on the escapades and tomfoolery of the German medieval folk hero Till Eulenspiegel (translation: owl mirror). Known for being a flirtatious rascal who flouts authority, Strauss’ music depicts a string of exploits and pranks, all of which lead to a fateful ending.

Time	Musical Elements	Instrument or Family
<p>Form: Rondo Typically a rondo is built on a recurring principal theme which alternates with one or more contrasting themes or episodes throughout the composition. In <i>Till Eulenspiegel</i> two distinct themes chase each other with infuriating yet amusing, at times even charming, regularity while being surrounded by contrasting escapades of musical mischief until the very end.</p>		
0:00	The tale begins: “ <i>Once upon a time, there was a roguish jester . . .</i> ” Introduction of a 6 note motive (Theme A).	Strings, clarinet & bassoon
0:19	“ <i>whose name was Till Eulenspiegel.</i> ” Introduced by the horn, Till’s theme (Theme B) will reappear in multiple forms of variations and settings.	A series of solos by horn, oboes & clarinets introduce Theme A, followed by full orchestra
1:02	“ <i>who was a rascally scamp!</i> ” Built on the introductory motive (Theme A), Till’s mischievous and mocking laugh is heard for the first time and then immediately followed by the composer’s inside musical joke: the subtle use of a “Tristan” chord to foreshadow the rascal’s discordant character.	Clarinet solo (Theme B) Oboes & English horn Tristan chord Bb E G# C# (See <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> by Richard Wagner)
1:11	Repeated rhythms depict Till on horseback riding through the countryside in search of adventure in a nearby town.	Strings & trombone, joined by woodwinds, & additional brass
1:26	Till’s entrance into the town’s marketplace begins to stir commotion, resulting in the spilling of goods and produce. By fragmenting Till’s themes (A & B), Strauss creates a series of musical smirks to tease the listener until reaching two fortissimo disruptions early on in this adventure.	Full orchestra




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2:05	Although Till finds the ensuing chaos funny - his laugh sprinkled amongst the woodwinds - he scampers away to momentarily hide and observe the resulting turmoil.	Flute with bassoons and strings followed by "snickers" in the clarinet, oboe & English horn
2:53	Till suddenly reappears on horseback, crashing into carts, upsetting tables, and creating turmoil. Amid futile attempts to catch him, Till's laughter can be heard over the enraged voices of the townspeople.	Bass clarinet solo followed by crash cymbals, ratchet & full orchestra climaxing in an unexpected silence
3:18	The music suddenly softens as an amused Till rides away all the while contemplating his next prank. With the entrance of the flute, English horn & violas, the next exploit begins to take shape.	Bassoon & cello pizzicati lead to a chromatic scale with the bass clarinet, & then echoed by the violins, clarinet & oboe.
3:46	Stately music sets the mood as Till has decided to poke fun at the clergy by donning the frock of a priest. A subtle bass line hints at Till's true intentions as mocking laughs from the clarinet and solo violin interrupt his "preaching."	Violas with clarinets & bassoons
4:35	The sudden appearance of a repeated triplet figure serves as an ominous premonition of Till's fate should his mockery of the priesthood continue; a premonition that will return.	Chromatic triplets by violins with muted trumpets & horns
5:02	Quietly laughing off the omen, Till decides to end this charade and move on to a new adventure which is revealed by a shout and a rhythmic glissando from a solo violin.	Solo violin
5:09	Now in search of love, tender variations of Themes A & B and heart-warming Strauss harmonies accompany Till's transformation into a chivalrous Don Juan, who graciously exchanges pleasantries with the ladies.	Strings, solo woodwinds, horns & triangle
5:33	One young woman Till finds to be particularly enchanting and she quickly becomes the object of his advances. Lush chromatic lines and expressive glissandi surround a romanticized variation of Theme B, declared first in the cellos and horns and then quickly overlapped by the violins, flute and clarinet.	Cellos & horns, imitated immediately (stretto) by violins, flute & clarinet
5:38	Not interested, the young woman attempts to discourage "Don Juan's" advances with a polite "Oh no, no, no." The intensity of the conversation quickly crescendos while disapproving bystanders can be heard chattering in the background.	4 ascending ornamented pitches in clarinets, bass clarinet & trumpets with oboes & timpani in the background
5:53	Not about to take "No" for an answer, Till calmly reasserts	Horn solo and 1 st violins




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	himself (Theme B) and his desires. But once again the young woman quietly, but in somewhat of a derisive voice, continues to reject Till's advances.	with 4 descending ornamented pitches in 2 nd violins, flutes & horns
6:05	Till suddenly becomes enraged over the woman's rebuke. A heated argument, built on the opening motive, quickly ensues. Angry voices are exchanged back and forth at an ever increasing ferocity. Bystanders become increasingly concerned.	Initially trumpets & trombones dialogue with chromatic chatter in the strings & horns, leading to full orchestra
6:39	Till abruptly ends the encounter with a brazen statement of superiority (Theme B). Never failing to get the last word, Till shows his contempt with two conceited taunts (Theme A variation) before being drawn to the approach of a new group worthy of his disdain.	Horn soli followed by clarinet solos and strings
6:47	A pompous theme in a minor key portrays an assemblage of academics in scholarly deliberation. Till can be heard attempting to intervene (Theme B variation), his voice progressively growing more agitated - quicker, louder and higher - but he is ignored.	Bassoons, contra-bassoon & bass clarinet Violins & horn Violins & trumpet Violins & flutes
7:18	Unperturbed, as deliberations resume Till is determined to engage in intellectual double-talk. After pontificating a few absurd theories, Till stands back and laughs (Theme A variations) as loud arguments quickly erupt between the professed dispensers of knowledge.	Low strings, bassoons, contra-bassoon & horns Fortissimo low strings, trombones, timpani & bass drum.
8:11	Bursts of laughter are followed by Till's sustained fortissimo shout of disgust and disapproval; in the composer's words a "Grosse Grimasse." Till walks away leaving academia befuddled.	Full orchestra
8:23	Whistling a carefree tune and highly amused by his recent encounter with authority, Till smugly moves on.	Violins & clarinets
8:34	Foreboding tones suddenly raise doubts and a repeat of the introductory motive quietly intrudes upon Till's complacent mood. Till shrugs off the questioning of his behavior with two derogatory sneers (Theme A variations).	Strings & woodwinds, supplemented by horns, trombones & tuba and concluding with solo oboe
9:05	Interwoven with fragments of Theme A, recurring statements of a rapid 16 th note figure derived from Theme B serve as a bridge to the return of an ever-confident Till.	Clarinet & violins with English horn, trumpet & French horn
9:36	His insolence knowing no bounds and once again brimming	Horn



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	with confidence on his ability to outwit any foe, the merry jester reemerges in search of new conquests.	
9:56	Reliving recent escapades and envisioning future pranks fills Till's spirit, and generates a crescendoing level of self-amusement until he can no longer control himself and bursts out laughing.	Full Orchestra
10:33	A triumphal march (expanded Theme B) heralds the presence of the invincible Till Eulenspiegel.	Fortissimo horns & trombones with full orchestra
10:48	The merriment continues as an exuberant Till breaks into a victory dance (Theme B).	Horns accompanied by strings & woodwinds
11:32	The excitement builds at a frenzied pace, resolving in a celebratory shout of superiority and a majestic flourish.	Full orchestra
12:00	Without warning Till is apprehended by authorities and brought before a judge. Fortissimo rolls by military drums and repeated F minor chords assert the seriousness of the charges. Till is questioned, but always the rogue, the judge's assertions do not initially temper his disrespectful behavior as he calmly whistles his indifference.	Multiple snare drums, timpani & bass drum followed by strings, low woodwinds, horns, trombones & tuba Solo clarinet with oboes & English horn
12:23	Till is questioned a second time, but again he nonchalantly whistles his indifference.	Solo clarinet with oboes & English horn
12:45	Growing impatient, the judge challenges the rascal a third time. Till screams his indignant response in a loud and distorted voice. A fourth challenge from the judge goes unanswered.	Solo clarinet
13:10	The ominous premonition from Till's earlier mocking of the clergy returns. Fear seizes Till as he begins to realize there may be no escape this time.	Violins with muted trumpets & horns
13:18	As he nervously stands before the judge, Till's sentence is announced: Guilty as Charged! " <i>Up the ladder with him.</i> " Till is dragged up the steps to where the gallows await.	Tremelo strings precede low woodwinds & brass, followed by solo D soprano clarinet
13:47	The rascal's last gasp. Till's mortal self is finished.	Pizzicato strings with timpani & sustained muted horns.



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14:07	Epilogue: A moment of silence precedes a quiet return of the "Once upon a time" opening, as Strauss reminds the listener that this has only been a musical tale; a tone poem. A dreamlike, "fairy-tale" tone from the triangle leads to "composed" remembrances of the rascal and his laugh. (Themes A & B)	Strings, flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon & triangle
15:18	The enduring spirit of the prankster mocks us one final time as Strauss closes his storybook score with a smile and a laugh.	Full orchestra